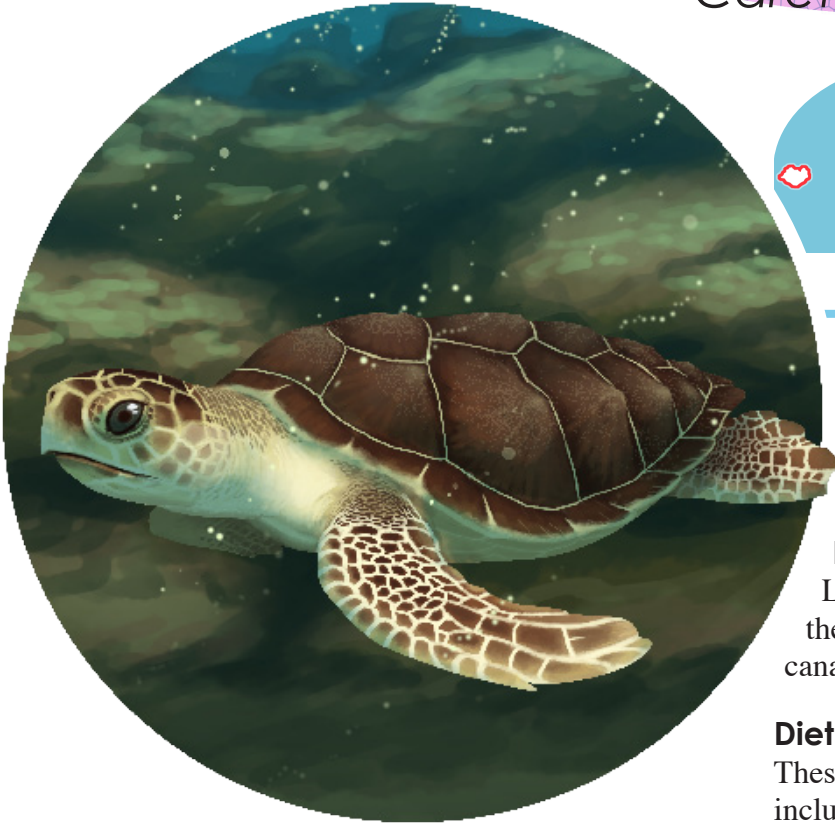


Loggerhead Sea Turtle

Caretta caretta



Family: Cheloniidae
Order: Chelonia

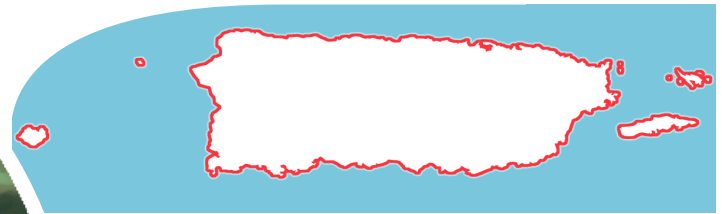
Description

The loggerhead sea turtle is an unfamiliar sea turtle species in Puerto Rico. Adult turtles can reach a length of approximately 3 feet (1 meter) long and an average weight of 200 pounds (91 kilograms). It is characterized by its large head. Its rather peculiar beak is made up of two solid, curved mandibles. The carapace, or shell, is notably longer than it is wide, and is formed of callous scutes (plates), distinguishing it from the hawksbill sea turtle. The adult loggerheads are usually of a brownish red color, and young turtles have dark lines.

Biological Information

Reproduction

In the southeast United States, nesting season lasts from May through August. The loggerhead lays its eggs at nighttime every 2 or 3 years. It can lay between 3 to 5 clutches of eggs in one season over



Distribution ■

approximately 12-day intervals. An average clutch size includes 115 eggs, and the incubation period lasts between 49 to 68 days (averaging at 55 days). The hatchlings usually emerge at night.

Habitat

Loggerheads can be found hundreds of miles into the open sea, as well as in bays, lagoons, navigation canals, coral reefs, rocky areas and shipwrecks.

Diet

These turtles are primarily carnivorous. Their diet includes crabs and other crustaceans, echinoderms, gastropods and fish.

Distribution

This species is widely distributed, and can be found in temperate, subtropical waters around the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, and the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The beaches with the most nests are found in Australia, the Sultanate of Oman in Asia, and in southeast US. There are no known nesting sites in Puerto Rico, or in the US Virgin Islands. As a matter of fact, the only sightings of the loggerhead sea turtle in Puerto Rico have been limited to the waters northeast and southeast of the Island.

Threats

Some of the factors contributing to the reduction in the amount of loggerhead sea turtles include: beach erosion, coastal developments, artificial lighting, recreation-related disturbances (such as driving on the beach and boat collisions), the introduction of exotic vegetation, nest depredations, slaughter, pollution (such as oil spills), dredging, use of fishing nets, becoming trapped in energy facilities, ingestion

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of garbage found in the sea, and naturally-occurring diseases.

Conservation Measures

The loggerhead sea turtle is protected by federal and state law, as are all other sea turtle species. The loggerhead was listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1978.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, prohibits the killing, harassing, trapping, purchasing or selling any species, as well as parts and products derived from the species.

References

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Decline of the Sea Turtles -Causes and Prevention. 1990. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.

Additional Information

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